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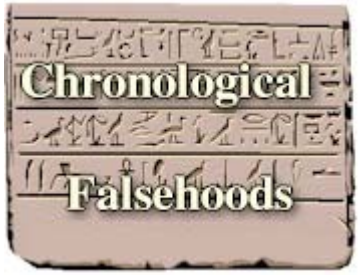

Chronological Falsehoods

By Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1998

The modern period in which we live has been one of the most productive in making scientific discoveries. Had the ancient world been given even a token glimpse of our modern achievements they would have been awe-struck at the prospect. There have also been great strides in understanding biblical matters, and this was prophesied to happen at the End of the Age (Daniel 12:4,9). Indeed, here we are on the verge of entering not only another century of time, but also a new millennium and the world is burgeoning forth with more discoveries and achievements that even boggle our minds who are supposed to be attuned to such things.

The fact is, God will allow even more scientific and historical discoveries to be achieved in the few years ahead of us. The main reason for the existence of the Associates for Scriptural Knowledge (A.S.K.) is to be at the forefront in examining what the teachings of the Holy Scriptures are all about. We place in prime position of importance the revelation of new discoveries in matters dealing with the Scriptures. We are here to help straighten out (with God's assistance) the problems of mis-education and/or mis-information that have afflicted the world because of a lack of knowledge in what the Bible actually teaches. Thankfully, great and marvelous things have been divulged to us at this End-Time, and more are yet to witness the light of day.

Be this as it may, I now wish to bring to your attention a historical problem (which has as its basic premise the comprehension of details involving past chronological times). What I wish to discuss is a historical difficulty that has yet to be solved to the satisfaction of any intelligent scholar. Sir Isaac Newton over 300 hundred years ago devoted a great deal of his time in an attempt to solve this historical matter we are discussing, but he was unable to bring the subject into any reliable consensus of agreement that would satisfy all the historical, astronomical and biblical factors that would make the matter clear. Some scholars a few years after Newton thought they had solved the problem (and, they blithely became contented that the matter was solved and went merrily on their way without any

further investigation into the historical problem). Indeed, the scholarly world today has even adopted what those scholars after Sir Isaac Newton suggested was true, and even now their conclusions have rarely been challenged. On the other hand, those who were wise in historical matters were well aware that the situation was not solved and a few brave souls have tried to solve the matter on their own.

What is this problem of which we are all concerned? It is to comprehend historical events before the time of Alexander the Great in a way that satisfactorily blends all the documentary evidence from historical records with astronomical data (notably eclipse records and other planetary details) that would bring full harmony into all chronological aspects of the Persian and Neo-Babylonian periods in history. Believe it or not, that period of time (that reaches backwards from B.C.375 in the later Persian period to the start of the seventh century B.C.) is not sufficiently known with exactitude. The reason this presents a difficulty is because *all* of the prophecies of the Old Testament that have a chronological basis attached to them have their beginnings or endings within that crucial period. In a word, if we do not understand the exact sequence of years over that 200 years of time, then we are going to be using chronological falsehoods as benchmarks in trying to adopt biblical prophecies as they relate to the coming of Christ Jesus into the world and the End of the Age. It is most important that we comprehend the precise chronological years for the whole period of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian governments on earth.

At the beginning of this century, Dr. E.W. Bullinger in his "*Companion Bible*" endeavored to straighten out the chronology of the period of Ezra and Nehemiah. He thought that he had solved that particular period of time, but his suggestions have proved to be wrong. There is no scholar today who even gives the opinions of Bullinger a second glance. The problem was, Bullinger gave no real secular historical information that was backed up with astronomical data that could vindicate that his assumptions were correct.

A short time later, a scholar and historian by the name of Martin Anstey in his book "The Romance of Biblical Chronology" made a further attempt to solve the matter. What was excellent about Anstey's work is the fact that he so brilliantly identified the main problem in sorting out the chronology of the secular world at this crucial time period. He showed in the clearest of ways that the world’s scholars had gone over to accepting (in a dogmatic sense) the astronomical and secular historical opinions of a man from Alexandria, Egypt who lived in the second century of our era. That man was Claudius Ptolemy. Ptolemy was accepted as infallible because he mentioned seven lunar eclipses that occurred within the late Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. These astronomical factors seemed to vindicate a table of the kings (called the Canon of Kings and mentioned by Ptolemy) who ruled in those areas Middle Eastern areas since 747 B.C. (according to Ptolemy's reckoning).

Anstey with great dexterity demonstrated that accepting Ptolemy in a dogmatic way was a very precarious and dangerous procedure. Adopting the opinions of this Egyptian

astronomer (whose first business was that of being an astrologer) as being the sole authority for understanding the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods was seen by Anstey as a reckless endeavor. Anstey was right! Yet, the whole secular world of the scholars (and sadly, even those who held the Scriptures in esteem) went over to accept Ptolemy's opinions in an infallible sense. Very few even questioned the conclusions of this early astronomer/astrologer. And today, when you look at any historical work or encyclopaedia concerning the dates of years within the Neo-Babylonian periods, you will see the opinions of Ptolemy in full evidence and with a rank of infallibility surrounding the dates he indicated.

Anstey saw the danger in this approach adopted by the scholars and accepted by all the intelligentsia in the world. As soon as I read Anstey's concern a little over forty years ago, I began to share his apprehension regarding this matter. What Anstey did was to make an attempt to straighten out the chronological mess that Ptolemy has bequeathed to us in trying to understand that critical two hundred years of history. He gave a noble attempt and he must be congratulated for his efforts. He made a courageous and reasonable attempt, but even he did not utilize to the fullest extent the eclipse, stellar and planetary data that could help make the period much more understandable. Indeed, some new discoveries in astronomical matters have come to the fore since Anstey wrote and they all need to be considered. To make it plain, Anstey's reconstruction (though a major contribution to solving the mess) was not backed up with reliable astronomical data that could harmonize the chronological history of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods that would be recognizable to all scholars. Scholars want indisputable proofs, and I do not blame them. The fact is, I am not out to chastise the scholars because I have also been misled on certain important subjects over the years. But what I do feel we need, is for all historians and biblical professionals to at least look at the available evidence. If they do in honesty, they will observe that there are some outstanding deficiencies in the present system that the world has dogmatically accepted as infallible. The truth is, though, most modern scholars do not even realize that they are so dependent on Ptolemy.

Recognizing a Problem in History is Important to Solving It

What I admire about the efforts of Anstey is the fact that he saw what the problem was and he did not try to avoid it. He wanted to solve the question in the best way he could. And though Anstey certainly identified the difficulty that needs to be solved, he was not able to solve it himself. This is not to his discredit, because the subject is a vast undertaking and it requires a host of committed scholars who will be devoted to solving it. It will not be easy to resolve. For one thing, it requires a professional understanding of astronomy and particularly a thorough knowledge of eclipse phenomena as they relate to historical events. When I saw Anstey's work over forty years ago, I immediately tossed in my hat in trying to solve the problem. Though some progress was made in a few areas, I have never been satisfied that the secular chronological indications involving the Neo-Babylonian and Persian

periods have been cleared up.

However, there is a positive side to all of this. What I have been discussing up to now IS NOT the chronology of the biblical revelation. I am speaking in this Prophetic Report about secular chronology on which most scholars base their comprehension of biblical chronology. Indeed, I have provided to all of you (over the past twenty years) a detailed chronology from the time of Adam to that of Christ (and that chronology has only had to be changed in one minor area as we grew in knowledge). When one looks at biblical chronology, it is consistent and harmonious from Adam to Christ. True, it does require a proper interpretation of biblical prophecies (especially those of Daniel), but once the scriptural interpretations are understood and accepted, we find that there are exactly 4000 years (to the very day) from the creation of Adam, our first parent, to the official introduction of Christ Jesus into this world. If you would like this proved, send for two Prophetic Reports that I have written titled "Chronology — the Key to Prophetic Understanding" (Parts One and Two) numbered A026 and A027. These Reports will make the matter of biblical chronology abundantly clear.

The problem, however, IS NOT the chronology of the Bible. It is the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods as understood by modern historians and theologians. Why is this a difficulty? Because almost all scholars of the Bible begin their countdown of biblical chronological indications *with false Babylonian and Persian dates* provided to us by the astrologer Claudius Ptolemy. This is where the problem lies. The scholars are not willing to depend solely on the Bible (indeed, they even treat it as a secondary choice or avoid it altogether). They focus their attention almost universally to the standard secular records that they have accepted from Ptolemy in order to provide chronological benchmarks even for indications of dates that are given in the Bible. By doing this, they have effectively corrupted the very basis of biblical chronology.

Indeed, it is the habitual practice of most prophetic interpreters (including Herbert W. Armstrong, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baptists, the Catholics, and individuals such as Hal Lindsey, Jack Van Impe, etc.) to automatically begin many of their prophetic schemes not from purely biblical dates but from the chronological indications provided to us by the great astrologer from Egypt. This procedure mandates conclusions that do not have the Holy Scriptures as their basis and standard. They then produce prophetic dates that are not biblical in any way. Yes, they may even use biblical chronological prophecies as the length of time between important historical events that lead up to the coming of Christ or to events associated with the End of the Age, but then they attach those biblical time sequences to *false* Babylonian and Persian dates that are as much in error as a three dollar bill. That is the problem. Most of the interpreters do not even realize what the problem is that they face. That is why Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Bullinger and Martin Anstey were so helpful. They recognized the problem and this is much to their credit.

An Example of the Chronological Problem

Let me give you an illustration of what most of the present prophetic interpreters do, and why they are wrong. If you will look closely in the Holy Scriptures there is *only ONE* place in the Old Testament where we have a secular historical date that equals a biblical date. That happens to be the references indicating the length of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. His 19th year is equaled in the Bible to the 11th year of Zedekiah the last king of Judah (II Kings 25:1-8). [There are other secular dates such as the first year of Cyrus (II Chronicles 36:22 with Ezra 1:1), but that date can only be determined by the application of the 70 prophetic years of the Babylonian Captivity mentioned by Jeremiah and Daniel. This is a valid indication, but it involves the interpretation of prophetic time periods and not simple historical matters like that of the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar equaling the 11th year of Zedekiah.] As for the New Testament, there is also *only ONE* place where secular history intersects precisely with a New Testament chronological statement. That is the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1,2), equaling the year Jesus commenced his ministry which we can show to be a Sabbatical Year (Autumn A.D.27 to A.D.28). Up to now, I have taken *this* Sabbatical Year to be the terminus to Daniel's 69 weeks (of his 70 weeks). This appears to be proper, but there is yet much work to do to be sure.

What almost all prophetic interpreters do with their chronological values that they have in the Holy Scriptures is TO LINK the biblical time periods ONTO those *false* secular time indications (those three words in this sentence require capitalization for emphasis). By doing this, they attach some thing true to some thing that is false, and the conclusion is always in error. For example, if you wanted to know when the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar was in history, you would normally go to an encyclopaedia and find what the scholars said the date was. It will be either 586 or 587 B.C. (three hundred years ago the year was normally given as 585 B.C.). But this date is that which is derived from the astrologer Ptolemy. Even these three suggested years are in various ways based on Ptolemy's opinions that he expressed some 800 years after Nebuchadnezzar, and founded on faulty astronomical data (that we have lately found out). It is no wonder that people who are setting dates for the End-Time are wrong. This is because they are attaching the biblical time periods onto false secular ones. This makes the whole of their prophetic schemes to be wrong from the very start. But wait a moment. There is hope. God said he would reveal His truths at the End of the Age concerning his prophecies. We are now closer to that Age. It is just over the horizon. We can now know that Ptolemy was as wrong as he could be in his chronological evaluations. Let us see.

A Major Breakthrough Has Occurred

In the last twenty years, we have had the research of an astronomer from John Hopkins

University, Dr. Robert R. Newton, who has written extensively on the falsities given to us by the astrologer Ptolemy. He wrote a book titled: "*The Crimes of Claudius Ptolemy*." In that book, and in several others that Dr. Newton has written since, he has shown in the clearest of language that anyone can check (and I have done so), that Ptolemy actually manufactured his eclipse records that he claimed to have observed in the early records that have been used by all modern authorities to justify the chronological basis for the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods of time. The outcome of this excellent and interesting research by Dr. Newton (who died about 5 years ago) is the fact that all scholars need to review all over again the secular historical records along with accurate astronomical data that are capable of dovetailing with these secular accounts in order to make a harmonious and understandable chronological scheme for the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. This is precisely what I hope to do (with other interested people) in my new book on "Biblical Chronology" which I hope to bring out in the future.

What it means is: we cannot automatically (as most of us have done before) simply look up what the scholars say the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar was, either 586 or 587 B.C. (or even 585 B.C. as the early historians 300 years ago thought) and use that date as a correct benchmark to attach the chronological indications in the prophecies of Daniel or the Book of Revelation. We have to go back to the basics once again and figure out just when the true secular dates were for the years of Nebuchadnezzar. Once we arrive at the true dates, then we can use those years as the proper benchmarks that will provide us with a correct understanding of the biblical prophecies. It is imperative that students of the Bible begin to correct this dangerous fault imposed on the world.

Early Scholars Refute Claudius Ptolemy

Modern scholars of the last 300 years should not have been so quick to accept the opinions of the astrologer Claudius Ptolemy in deriving what they consider to be "infallible" dates for the kings who ruled in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. They should have listened to some contemporaries of Ptolemy who were very prone to criticize the conclusions of Ptolemy.

For example, there was Plutarch (the great classical historian of the second century who lived at the same time as Ptolemy). He said that the account of Solon the Greek speaking to Croseus of Lydia was a narrative that made sense in any way one would look at it, except that the chronological canons that many were accepting at the time would not allow the conversations to have occurred. There were about 50 years discrepancy that would not permit the two men to have ever spoken to one another (that is, if one accepts Ptolemy's opinion). But Plutarch said:

> **"As for his interview with Croesus, some pretend to prove from chronology that it is fictitious. But since the story is so famous, and so**

> **well attested, nay, what is more, so agreeable to Solon's character, so worthy of his wisdom and magnanimity, I** [Plutarch] **cannot prevail with myself to reject it for the sake of certain chronological tables, which *thousands* are correcting to this day, without being able to bring them to any certainty."**
>
> - **Plutarch's Lives, *Solon*, Langhorne's trans.**

Plutarch gave further problems with chronology in the Persian period that we are discussing. Again he said:

> **"Thucydides and Charon of Lampsacus relate that Xerxes** [the Persian king] **was then dead, and that it was to his son Artaxerxes that Themistocles addressed himself. But Ephorus, Dinon, Clitarchus, Heraclides, and several others, write that Xerxes himself was then upon the throne. The opinion of Thucydides seems most agreeable to chronology, though** [chronology of that time] **is not perfectly well settled."**
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> - **Plutarch's Lives, *Themistocles*, Langhorne's translation**

The above comments are true and honest evaluations by Plutarch, and I believe he was correct. Those who held with Ptolemy of Egypt would make the encounter to be not possible, but who could prove that the chronological canons were correct when ***thousands*** at the time (Plutarch said) were working on them trying to mend their errors. But now, it is not ***thousands*** that are trying to correct this chronological malady, it has now ***millions***.

Early Chronology Grossly Misunderstood

Let us now look at the accounts of classical writers who lived within the crucial period we have been discussing, or who referred to events within that period which were well known to later people. Let us first look at the narrative of Xenophen. All the dates given in parentheses are the normal Ptolemaic dates. Before 375 B.C., these dates may have to be changed as much as 54 years and one month. I will explain why later.

Xenophen (c.420 B.C.) made a journey to Persia and tells about historical events of the Babylonians and Persians, which are diametrically opposite those related by Herodotus and others. Most commentators appraise Xenophen's works with the title of "historical romances." Most scholars believe there is very little substantial truth to support them. While there are some things of worth in Xenophen it's either that he is right and all the others wrong, or that he is wrong along with many others who contradict him.

Thucydides (c.430 B.C.) wrote a history of the Peloponnesian War. He said in his first

paragraph that history was in such a corrupt state that he could not tell of events in the very generation that preceded his own.

Ctesias (c.400 B.C.) was also a historian well known in the ancient world. This man was a Greek physician who lived at the court of the Persian King Artaxerxes Mnemon as the king's private doctor. "During his stay in Persia, Ctesias gathered all the information that was attainable on that country" (Smith's Classical Dictionary) — all about its history, customs, chronology, etc. But he was also called by many ancient historians the greatest liar that ever came on the earth. For example, he was convinced that Nineveh was destroyed by the Medes in 877 B.C., but according to our modern reckoning based on Ptolemy, he was 265 years off the mark. That is just one absurdity out of many that Ctesias fabricated and yet he supposedly got all his information direct from the Persian records of the king. Sir John Forsdyke, in his valuable book "*Greece Before Homer*," said that Ctesias' Persian informants (if he got his information from them) must have had very short memories and could not relate the true history of what was happening in Babylon and Persia a mere 100 years before their time (page 77). In spite of these anomalies, modern scholars prefer the Gentile records more than those of the Bible.

Scholars Want to Alter Bible Chronology to Agree With Faulty Secular Dates

Note what Professor Mitchell had to say relying on the eclipse data of Ptolemy.

> **"The dates herewith given in Babylonian and Assyrian history admit of no uncertainty since they are determined by eclipses. As a consequence, the dates appearing in the Bible *must be altered* to fit those of verified history" (Prof. S.A. Mitchell, "*Eclipses of the Sun*," p.29). Also "As a result of the Babylonian eclipses, it has been necessary *to alter the chronology of the Bible* by lowering the dates to the extent of twenty-five years"**
>
> - ***ibid*., p.1.9**

Oh? Let me ask a few questions. When did Columbus discover the New World? 1492 without doubt! But if some chronologer told you it was 1254 A.D., or another said 1148 A.D. another 1570 A. D., and others gave many other dates, you might well ask them to have their heads examined. And rightly so, because it can be proved that Columbus discovered America in 1492 A.D. After all, the event was less than 500 years ago and there could hardly be a mistake in our modern times.

But strange as it may seem, when many ancient historians who lived after the time of Alexander the Great endeavored to calculate important dates in the Babylonian and Persian times (in some cases a mere 200 to 300 years before their own times), *chaos reigned*! The

understanding of the Babylonian period and its chronology was no easy matter for ancient historians. Let us see.

Take an important year within the Babylonian Period (the benchmark year for the understanding of the chronology of the Old Testament) which is the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar. The Bible said this year was the same as the 11th of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. This year is dated to 585 B.C. by the Canon of Ptolemy (scholars have manipulated the date and have stretched to be either 586 or 587 B.C.). But, was this date like Columbus' 1492? Did all subscribe to it? Was it the standard date accepted by all ancient historians? Hardly! Notice what many of the early historians had to say.

Josephus (1st century A.D.) gave a date very different. Josephus was a historian of the first rank, a priest who had access to and referred to the archives in the Temple in Jerusalem as well as all the records in the imperial library at Rome including Babylonian, Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, Persian histories. He stated quite confidently that Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 639 B.C., but when he followed the chronology of Berosus, he said it was 619 B.C.

Ctesias (4th century B.C.), whom we referred to before, shows it was probably 850 B.C. (since he placed the fall of Nineveh in 877 B.C., and it fell 27 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the date 850 B.C. is reached.) Demetrius (last of 3rd century B.C.) was a Jewish historian from Alexandria. He worked out with great precision that there were 338 years and 3 months from the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to King Ptolemy (i.e. 222 B.C.). Thus, by his chronology, Jerusalem fell in 560 B.C. See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1, 21, 141.

Africanus (3rd century A.D.), the first Christian chronologer, shows that Jerusalem fell in 629 B.C. (Archer, *Jerome's Commentary*, p.96). But Hippolytus (3rd century A.D.), one of the most educated men in Italy, stated that Jerusalem fell in 664 B.C. (Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, p.147). Yet, Jerome, in the late fourth and early fifth century A.D., who was one of the great historians of the past and editor of the chronologies of Africanus and Eusebius, said Jerusalem fell in the year 591 B.C. See Finegan, *ibid.,*p.185.

So there it is. For one important benchmark date in history, we have some scholars saying it was 585 B.C. (and others say 586 or 587 B.C.). Ctesias, however, said the capture of Jerusalem was 850 B.C.; while Hippolytus said, 664 B.C.; Josephus 639 B.C.; Africanus, 629 B.C.; Jerome, 591 B.C.; Demetrius, 560 B.C. and Tertullian, 507 B.C. All of these dates are supposed to tell us ***when one year of human history occurred***. Which one should we select? They are all supported by so-called chronological records given to us by various historians of the past. It would be the height of folly to try to reconcile them all. That is not possible.

Another benchmark which historians recognize as significant in standardizing the chronology of the Babylonian and Persian periods, is the year that Babylon was captured by Cyrus. This is dated by the Canon of Ptolemy to the year 538 B.C. (the second century record that is followed by most historians today). But were the ancients certain of this year? Others expressed different opinions.

Diodorus (1st century B.C.), one of the finest historians of classical times, said the year Cyrus took Babylon was in 560 B.C. See Finegan's *Handbook to Biblical Chronology*, p.168. Diodorus simply followed the majority of Greek historians who "placed the accession of Cyrus *wrongly* in the first year of the 55th Olympiad (i.e. 560 B.C.)" (Forsdyke, *ibid.*, p.71). The Greeks did this and it is 22 years different from what people accept today. These anomalies in the historical records ought to have shown red flags to modern historians, but to no avail.

Eusebius (4th century A.D.) also followed the Greeks in this matter of Cyrus' first year, and made Cyrus' entry into Babylon in 560 B.C. (Finegan, p.168) or by another way of figuring it, 556 B.C. (Archer, *Jerome's Commentary*, pp.99,100). As anyone can see, both dates are different from 538 B.C. Jerome (4th century A.D.) said that by "the most careful computation," Cyrus' entry into Babylon was in 560 B.C. (Archer, *ibid*., pp.105, 109). In this he followed Eusebius and the Greeks as a whole. Clement of Alexandria (3rd century A.D.) also asserted that the first year of Cyrus and the time he entered Babylon to become its king was in 560 B.C. (*Lange's Commentary*, vol.7, p.207). But Julius Hilarianus (c.4th century A.D.) was confident that Cyrus' first year was 599 B.C. (*ibid*.). And Prosper Aquitan (5th century A.D.) said it was 503 B.C. (*ibid*.) Orosius (5th century A.D.) said it was really 516 B.C. (*ibid*.). What a mixture of dates for one date in the history of Persia!

What is the outcome of all this? Pliny, the natural scientist of the first century, said that the period from the 700's to the 400's B.C. (the very period we are concerned with) has many chronological difficulties in it and that "the chronicles, were without doubt, *in error*" (Book XXXV, 58). As an example of the chaos that ruled during the period, he cited an event that some dated to 420 B.C. (i.e. the 89th Olympiad) yet others in the 95th (400 B.C.). These types of errors are widespread in the ancient records, but modern historians ignore them.

However, by the end of the 4th century A.D. all chronological matters of the past were supposedly worked out by Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. According to Augustine, the great Catholic historian of the fifth century, Ambrose was able to account for Plato having such wonderful biblical teaching in his dialogues. The answer supposedly became plain to Ambrose and Augustine, but they were so far off base that their suggestions become laughable.

"As to the utility of history, moreover, what a great question our own Ambrose *has set at rest*....did not the illustrious bishop, when by his investigations into profane history he had discovered that Plato made a journey into Egypt at the time Jeremiah was there, show that it is much more likely that Plato learned his teachings from Jeremiah."

- **Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, II, 43.**

This chronological belief of Augustine and Ambrose is absurd. In fact, Plato flourished about 380 B.C. while Jeremiah went to Egypt, according to present chronology, about 585 B.C. There are 200 years between them.

Summary of Material

Let us understand a thumbnail's sketch of the problem at hand. Top historians of the past admitted that they often had insufficient knowledge to understand even what happen a generation or two before their own times. Herodotus (450 B.C.) didn't know what had happened 75 years before he lived. Thucydides (430 B.C.) said he dare not consider recording events 30 years before his time because the records were so much in error. Ctesias (4th century B.C.) and his Persian advisors at the king's court, were wrong to the extent of over 250 years on events that occurred no more than 300 years before his time. Josephus, Demetrius, Africanus, Hippolytus, Eusebius, Diodorus, Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Clement, Justin, Hilarianus, Prosper, Orosius, *all* have different dates for two cardinal benchmarks of the Babylonian period (which can easily be understood from biblical chronology). And remember the classic statement by Plutarch (who lived at the very time of Claudius Ptolemy). He said *thousands* were trying to adjust the many *contradictions* of the Babylonian and Persian periods, but without success. And Pliny also said about our early historical period under discussion: "*the chronicles, were without doubt, in error*."

Now all of these "authorities" agree on the year of Alexander's conquest of Persia (no dispute whatever, nor should there be), but for the 300 years before that time, the period is beset with many, many difficulties. That is, unless we go to the only source that can straighten out this confusion. That source is God's Word. Instead of going first to Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year from a Babylonian perspective (that is, saying: "Let us go to Babylon for a proper chronology"), we should adopt God's way and say: "To understand Gentile chronology, *go to the Bible*." I object most strenuously that we of modern times should resort to the Babylonians and Egyptians.

The Views of Claudius Ptolemy Are Still Considered by Scholars Today as Perfect

The opinions of Claudius Ptolemy are looked on as infallible. But there are problems galore

with Ptolemy. Nevertheless, Ptolemy is still accepted. This is because he lists seven eclipses of the moon which occurred at intervals from his dates of 747 B.C. to 330 B.C. These seven eclipses, because they agree with our modern astronomical tables, give Ptolemy a form of authenticity that none of the others had of the *thousands* Plutarch said were working on chronology. Not all things were sensible. Look at the lunar eclipses of Ptolemy.

Ptolemy recorded eclipses of the moon in the 1st and 2nd year of Merodach-baladan (which according to him was on March 19, 720 B.C.; March 8, 719 B.C.; and September 1, 719 B.C.). Another was in the 5th year of Nabopolassar (April 22, 600 B.C.). Also one in the 7th of Cambyses (July 16, 522 B.C.). And two more in the 20th and 31st of Darius Hystapses (November 19, 501 B.C. and April 25, 490 B.C.).

These seven eclipses scattered throughout the 400 odd years from 747 to 330 B.C. all agree with the modern tables showing the motions of the moon. This is why they are accepted by historians as proof positive that Ptolemy's chronology of the Babylonian and Persian periods is correct at the expense of all others who say otherwise. Thus, his reckoning is considered perfect, infallible and indestructible.

The historian Prideaux, of the eighteenth century who helped to establish Ptolemy's infallibility, said:

> **"Ptolemy's Canon being fixed by the eclipses, the truth of it may at any time be demonstrated by astronomical calculations, and no one has ever calculated those eclipses but has found them fall in the times where placed; and, therefore, this being the surest guide which we have in Chronology, and it being also verified by its agreement everywhere with the Holy Scripture [sic], it is not for the authority of any other human writer whatsoever to be receded from."**

These are strong words. He placed hedges of infallibility around Ptolemy's Canon of Kings. He gave an aura of authority that all other chronological systems must be judged by Ptolemy's opinions or be fit only for the trash can. This is the way almost all of the world's historians look on the matter. Ptolemy is the judge—not one other witness is even allowed. All has been standardized by Ptolemy, it is assumed, for all time to come.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed.) said that Ptolemy's Canon is **"the only authentic source of history of Assyria and Babylonia before the recent discoveries at Nineveh"** (article on "Chronology"). Lloyd and Marshall, two of the world's greatest chronologists, regard Ptolemy's Canon as "the most precious monument of antiquity."

But why is so much authority given to this second century A.D. document preserved by an Egyptian astrologer attached to the Chaldean priesthood? It is because of those *seven*

eclipses of the moon! And those eclipses, at first glance, do seem to be a formidable adversary to any other chronological scheme put forward, even though it may come directly from the Bible. The reason? Astronomy never lies!

True enough, astronomy is a sure guide if used properly. But look at Ptolemy. He used only seven lunar eclipses. Why only seven? Ptolemy should have used many more. The fact is, lunar eclipses occur quite frequently. There were literally hundreds that occurred in the period Ptolemy covered, but he was only able to involve seven? Look, out of that 400 year period (the time of the Babylonian and Persian Empires) there were over 600 lunar eclipses visible to the earth. It is true that not all of these could be observed from the region of Babylon (the only area Ptolemy is concerned with). Yet, it was possible for the Babylonians to witness and to record over 300 of them. But of all these 300 eclipses, Ptolemy was able to muster only *seven*.

This lapse is odd, indeed. In fact, lunar eclipses occur in cycles. If a lunar eclipse is seen at any time, in 54 years and one month, that same type of eclipse will occur again in virtually the same part of the sky and with the same amount of the shadow of the earth on the moon. Any encyclopedia will inform a person that in any ten year period there are on the average 15 lunar eclipses observable from earth. That is a lot of eclipses. (Ptolemy only deals with lunar eclipses because the Chaldeans at this early period were unable to predict or to work with the more complicated solar eclipses.)

Astronomers (other than historians) have long complained that Ptolemy gave us only a pittance of eclipses when hundreds occurred. They are very disappointed in him. In fact, in the Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society, March, 1968, Professor Heather speaking about the eclipses of ancient times:

> **"There is no mention of important eclipses which one would have expected to be recorded such as that of 462 B.C. and there are those which are recorded that have no counterpart theoretically"**
>
> • ***p.549***

In fact, there are all types of eclipses that occurred right in Babylon that Ptolemy and others should have recorded—very prominent ones—that are passed over as though they never occurred, and there are many, many more eclipses mentioned by the classical writers which don't fit in with Ptolemy's eclipse chronology at all! What is interesting is the fact that Ptolemy only selected seven eclipses when over 300 were available. And now, thanks to the modern astronomical research by Dr. Robert R. Newton, he has proved dogmatically that every one of Ptolemy's eclipses was manufactured by Ptolemy himself. Indeed, Ptolemy found eclipses to fit his astrological scheme of chronology. See Dr. Newton's book "*The Origin of Ptolemy's Astronomical Tables*," The Center for Archaeoastronomy, at the

University of Maryland, published by John Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory.

Let us be very plain about this matter. The fact is, there are scores of ancient eclipses recorded faithfully by the ancients that can find no place in the chronological scheme suggested by Ptolemy—although his seven do! But what about the others which are equally authoritative? Come on folks, we need to do a little homework.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* (11th ed.) has this to say about many eclipses mentioned by the ancients:

> **"F. K, Ginzel has collected a great number of passages from classical authors supposed to refer to eclipses of the sun or moon, but the difficulty of identifying the phenomenon is frequently such as to justify great doubt as to the conclusions. In a few cases no eclipses corresponding to the description can be found by our modern tallies to have occurre**d [all the tables are based on Ptolemy]**, and in others the latitude of interpretation and the uncertainty of the date are so wide that the eclipse cannot be identified."**
>
> - ***vol. 8, p.892***

If Ptolemy were correct—that is, infallible, as suggested by the modern historians—then all these eclipses observed by the ancients would find a certain place on his table of eclipse cycles. They would have to fit precisely. However, more often than not, the records do not agree with Ptolemy in a vast majority of cases. It is true that a few eclipse texts have been found on the cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia and some of them seem to fit the Ptolemaic scheme. Or, better than saying "they fit Ptolemy's scheme," it is proper to say that scholars have taken the *eclipse records and* ***forced them to accord with Ptolemy***! This is what has happened in the Assyrian period. A scholar finds an eclipse tablet in a certain king's reign. They then lay out Ptolemy's so-called "standard" eclipse tables in front of them. They recognize a year, supported by Ptolemy's indications. Then, based on Ptolemy they try to determine when that eclipse should have occurred. If the eclipse date gets close to that of Ptolemy, then they accept it and they inform the world that the date has become infallibly proved by astronomy. What nonsense. The true chronological statements of the Holy Scriptures suffer because of this erroneous procedure. Because of this method in always trying to prove Ptolemy correct, Prof. Mitchell said:

> **"As a result of the Babylonian eclipses, it has been necessary to alter the chronology of the Bible by lowering the dates to the extent of twenty-five years."**
>
> - ***Eclipses of the Sun*, p.19**

What this means is the fact that God's truth — his plain chronological statements in the Bible — must be set aside and brought into subjection to the more "reliable" astronomical canon supported by Ptolemy the Alexandrian astrologer. The fact is, the world's historians are wrong in assuming that the system established by Ptolemy is infallibly correct (as they demand). I have not the slightest doubt that it will soon be discovered that it is the Bible that can straighten out Ptolemy and all the other Babylonian records. It is NOT Ptolemy that should be used to straighten out the Holy Scriptures. This is the problem in a nutshell.

The Ancient Eclipse Records

What is the answer to Ptolemy's seven eclipses? The conclusion is plain. The study of eclipses shows that there are eclipse cycles. For example, if there is an eclipse of the moon at a given time, in exactly 223 lunations later (called a Draconic Period in astronomy), another eclipse of the same type will reoccur. This means that after 18 years and 10 days the eclipse will happen again (more accurately, it takes three cycles — 54 years and one month — for the same type of eclipse to reoccur in the same part of the heavens and near the same time of the night). This cycle of 18 years and 10 days was known from about the 5th century B.C. It was called the Saros.

With the Saros here is what we have. If you find an eclipse record from ancient times (with all its dimensions clearly laid out), you will have many eclipses to equate it with all separated from one another by a Saros. Suppose you put it on the wrong Saros? You could be 18 years out—either too much or too little. If you are two or three Saroses out (you would still find the eclipse on your tables), you would still be 36 to 54 years out of phase with the actual events of history. Indeed, as I said above, in three Saros periods, the lunar eclipse will be almost identical to the former that was 54 years and one month before.

It is especially important to realize these points about the Saroses, since we now have the modern research of Dr. Robert R. Newton of John Hopkins University. He has shown that *all* of Ptolemy's lunar eclipses that he used to establish the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods *are all manufactured* by Ptolemy himself and are not valid for devising a proper history of those times. Ptolemy's eclipses are really quite fictitious. It is now time to get back to the real study of the actual eclipses that occurred in ancient times (especially in this crucial period of which we are discussing). When we observe the real astronomical facts, I do not have the slightest doubt that we can all arrive at a proper chronology for this period during which many prophecies have their benchmarks.

The sorting out this chronological problem will not be easy. It will involve the reviewing of all of the historical sources that speak about these things. In spite of the work that will be involved, I fully believe that we of modern times (who are just now approaching the End of the Age) can be instrumental in helping to secure this essential teaching that will establish

the true chronological basis for the Holy Scriptures. This has NOT YET been done! The project needs to be tackled as soon as possible. It is just that important.

This is one of the things I hope to do (or at least to contribute in doing) in my new book on chronology which I want to publish in the future. In the meantime, one should be very careful in setting particular dates for the fulfillment of prophecies that are based on erroneous astronomical observations established by the astrologer Ptolemy. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the Bible and its chronology (which many of us now have a good grasp in understanding), but it is the chronological falsehoods that have been provided to us by Claudius Ptolemy and the modern theologians who accept him as infallible that confuse the issue. Let us not begin to "set dates" for prophetic events until we have solved the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods.

I personally want to thank all of you who have encouraged me over the years to get the job done as soon as the time, personnel and resources become available to complete the work,. The outcome must be accurate so that all scholars in the world will be able to understand these important matters that are over-looked today. Modern historians and theologians need to abandon their apathy to solving this vital subject and begin to devote their time and effort to resolve it. We at A.S.K. pray that God will grant us those necessary requirements very soon.

A Biblical Summation: Babylon or the Bible?

The World Has Relied on the Babylonians and an Egyptian Astrologer to Give Them Their Chronology

Since the time of Ptolemy, the vast majority of historians tell us we must go to Babylonian records to obtain a proper chronology, and especially to the astrologer Claudius Ptolemy. However, God has something else to tell us:

"Flee out of the midst of Babylon" (Jeremiah. 50:6).

"My people, come ye out of the midst of her" (Jeremiah 51:45).

"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins" (Revelation 18:4).

"Depart ye, depart ye [from Babylon]**, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her: be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord"** (Isaiah 52:11).

And well should we come out, depart and flee from her — **"By thy sorceries were all nations deceived"** (Revelation 18:23).

"He hath judged the great whore, which *did corrupt* the earth with her fornications" (Revelation 19:2).

We all realize that the chief instrument that Satan the great deceiver uses to deceive the world! It is that system known as **"MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."**

And yet, at the very time God tells His people to flee from her—to come out of her—historians in the world, even many who love the Bible, *link up* with Babylon to have her tell us how to interpret the dating system of the Bible. Babylon's chronology is even considered perfect, infallible, without corruption and pure. This would have abandoned the plain and clear chronology/prophecies of the Bible. But Paul states with an urgent appeal:

> **"And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?... Wherefore come out from among them *and touch not the unclean thing*, and I will receive you."**
>
> - ***2 Corinthians 6:15-17***

In spite of Paul's warning, it has been thought necessary by the modern scholars of the world to go to Babylon for its chronology right at the beginning of the Babylonian system (at the time of Nebuchadnezzar). But is God really telling us to link up with Babylon at Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year because the Bible parallels it with the 11th of Zedekiah? If so, then God is saying to use the time reckoning of the great Babylonian deceiver. The Chaldean priests must be the true repositors of time and we must adjust all Biblical dates to agree with their system. After all, we are told by the modern scholars that those Babylonian/Egyptian dates are infallible. But should we do this?

We are told to seek the counsel of God many times, but there is no Scripture commanding us to seek the wisdom and understanding of the Babylonians and that of an Egyptian astrologer by the name of Claudius Ptolemy. Is it really right to counsel with the "great mother" about the meaning of the "times?"

The truth is, and as God has revealed, the Chaldeans throughout their whole history of existence have either been changing or attempting *to change* the times, years or seasons mentioned by God—which give all people the truth! Why should we *link up* with Babylon and Egypt when there is no need to do so? The Bible has its own clear cut, plainly understandable chronology for the beginning of the Babylonian period—indeed, it has a

perfect chronology all the way from Adam to the time of Christ. Why resort to Babylon and Egypt when God has His own chronology that is so easy to understand that a child can comprehend it?

The essence of this Prophetic Report is to put in your hands some of the major difficulties in trying to sort out the secular (and also biblical) chronological systems that we must understand if we are to rightly appraise and comprehend the prophecies of the Bible. I hope you can appreciate the problems, but God has promised to give us the truth before the End of the Age is over. I believe the matter will be sorted out.

Ernest L. Martin

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